

# Salisbury Gardens



Have your  
say...

*sold by the Isle of Wight Council?  
or retained for the town?*

**The Isle of Wight Council's political leaders are determined to sell this building and its green that have been at the heart of the town for 140 years.**

Ventnor Town Council is committed to retaining the building as a hub for the town's life and its green as a unique community resource.

Here we set out the background to this important choice and invite you to have your say about it.

Salisbury Gardens has been one of the town's more visible buildings for a very long time [page 2] and Ventnor residents were the last people to buy it [page 2].

The Town Council has developed two futures for it that both preserve the building for the town and contribute to Ventnor's economic and community life [page 3].

The proposals have attracted strong support from all the relevant Island Agencies [page 4] and there are options available to the Isle of Wight Council to make the building available to the Town Council [page 4].

However, the Isle of Wight Council Leader, David Pugh, has declared that the building will now be sold as soon as possible on the open market in order to use the £400,000 the Valuers have said it might raise for capital projects elsewhere on the Island [page 4].

While there's still time for that decision to be changed, Ventnor Town Council is determined that every resident in the town should have the opportunity to influence it [page 4]. **Please do.**



*Reception area*



*Ground floor meeting room*



*The Town Council's main office*

**SEE BACK PAGE FOR DETAILS OF HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY**

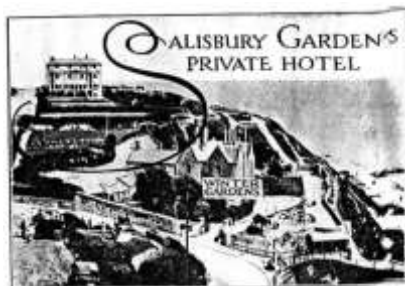
# 140 YEARS OF SERVICE

The work of local builders Ingrams in the early 1870s, it started its long life as two tenements, numbers 1 and 2 Salisbury Gardens.

In 1898 it was sold and opened in August 1899 as the Mount Pleasant Medical Home and Sanatorium treating TB sufferers for 3 guineas a week. A Mr Duval then opened it as the Salisbury Boarding Establishment with good cuisine and moderate terms before it became the home of the Ventnor Collegiate School.



By 1924 the building is known to have been providing schooling for nearly 100 pupils before becoming a private hotel charging £3/3/0p weekly in winter and £3/13/0p in summer!



The building was sold on by the proprietor's daughter following his death and was bought by Ventnor Town Council in 1945 for £6,100 that was borrowed from the Ministry of Health.

In August 1988 the then South Wight Borough Council applied

for planning permission for 8 flats, about which Ventnor Town Council presciently commented at its October 1988 meeting: *Salisbury Gardens is too valuable a site for development as flats. This premier position would be more suited to businesses.*

At the time of transfer to the new Unitary Authority of the Isle of Wight Council in July 1995, South Wight Borough Council had 55 staff based in the building which was then declared surplus to requirements by the new Council.

In August 1998, after spending £30,000 on refurbishment, the Isle of Wight Council launched its new Coastal Visitor Centre spread over 10 of the building's rooms and including a library of over 2,000 books and journals related to coastal management; it closed in September 2010 using a £49,900 Heritage Lottery Grant in the process.

Ventnor Town Council moved its offices into Salisbury Gardens - following its predecessor Ventnor Urban District Council - in February 2011 and now rents three of its 32 rooms.



## IT'S VENTNOR'S!

Ventnor residents were the last purchasers of the building: paying a total cost at today's prices of £395,410 over 40 years.

That was the decision of the then Ventnor Urban District Council on Monday 11 June 1945. They were already renting rooms there in the building's time as the Salisbury Hotel, but needed more space following the wartime bombing of one of their other offices at St John's House and the termination by the owner of their renting of Dunedin in Hambrough Road.

The Hotel was then on the market for £6,000 and the Council proposed to purchase it as the home for all its offices through a loan from the Ministry of Health.

Only one of the 14 Members - Cllr BW Russell - opposed the purchase forcing a Public Enquiry that took place in Ventnor on 25 September 1945. The Inspector heard that the Council proposed to purchase Salisbury Gardens through a loan of £6,100 repayable over 40 years at 3.5% and to offset the cost to the ratepayer by renting out the rooms the Council would not need to other local public services and businesses.

Approval for the loan was received in the last week of November 1945.

When Ventnor Urban District Council was absorbed into the new South Wight Borough Council on 1 April 1974, the building went with it. Formal ownership changed again when that Council was itself absorbed into the Isle of Wight Council in 1995.

They got it by legal transfer, not by buying it. The 1945 purchase price of £6,100 amounted to £11,342 with interest. Adjusting with the Retail Price Index gives a total equivalent of £410,000 - just a little more than David Pugh hopes to get for selling it this year.



## ENTERPRISE HUB

**In April last year the Town Council saw a unique opportunity to both stimulate the local economy and preserve an iconic building.**

The underused, run down and surplus to the Isle of Wight Council's requirements Coastal Centre [Salisbury Gardens] has the potential to provide 16 fit for purpose spaces for business startups in the creative industries and office services as well as a centre for community use.

The Business Plan (available on our web site) showed the project to be clearly viable and a £70,000 funding application for the building's restoration and restructuring to the recently launched Coastal Communities Fund gained Stage 1 approval and an invitation to submit a final application by 21 September.



A separate funding application for a further £30,000 to create and furnish community use rooms also passed its Stage 1 examination.

Success with these applications would have given the town council £100,000 for the refurbishment of the building for its proposed new contribution to the town's life and secured its future.

With strong support from all the relevant partner organisations, an attempt was made to open negotiations with the Isle of Wight Council for the purchase or lease of the building, formally listed by them for disposal in 2013/14.

But with time running out, the Isle of Wight Council

Leader David Pugh failed to discuss with us for nearly a month a request on 27 July from Mayor Steve Stubbings for a meeting to discuss the proposal. Then, finally, on 22 August, his decision: *It is the intention of the IW Council to dispose of the building on the Open Market, thus maximising the opportunity for a significant capital receipt.* Chief Executive Steve Beynon confirmed that on 17 September: *After reconsidering the coastal centre in Ventnor this decision stands and we will move to place it on the market ASAP.*



## CENTRAL SERVICES

**The Isle of Wight Council has a different plan for several of the town's local services.**

The Town Council has been invited to discuss with them their proposals for relocating the Library, the Youth Service, the Town Council and an Enterprise Hub all in the now empty St Boniface School.



However, the school is much less desirable than Salisbury Gardens on three major grounds: it isn't big enough, it's on the edge rather than the centre of town and its rooms are much less suitable.

The Town Council is convinced that this combination of services can be much more effectively housed in Salisbury Gardens where they will also be much more accessible to residents.

The lower ground floor area could provide a long-term home for the community hub the Library is on the way to becoming. Around a third of the 18 rooms over the other three floors

would be high quality accommodation for a Police presence, the local NHS services displaced from their Church View premises and the Town Council.

And that would still leave room for 10 or 12 business startup units for which there is a desperate need and no other suitable space in the town.

*Salisbury Gardens – What Next?* is published by Ventnor Town Council, Coastal Centre, Dudley Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1EJ.



---

## STRONG SUPPORT

In their determination to sell the building, the Isle of Wight Council's political leadership is ignoring support from all the relevant Island Agencies.

Those we invited to visit the building and discuss the project with us provided letters of support:



*We are excited about working in partnership with the Town Council to make their vision a reality and are committed to supporting them in this project.*



*The benefit to our residents and the wider community of Ventnor will be incredibly important, particularly in today's economic climate.*



*The Enterprise Hub would provide an excellent opportunity for the college to deliver skills and training courses to those who are isolated and unable to travel to Newport.*



The Commissioning Manager of the Isle of Wight Council's Adult & Community Learning Service wrote:

*the Service would be keen to support the development of the building;*

---

## COMMUNITY RIGHTS

The Government's Localism Act of 2011 sets out its wish to see more powers and responsibilities in the control of local communities.

The Isle of Wight Council could put this into action by:

**Community Asset Transfer**: the Council can use their CAT policy for transferring buildings to community organisations to continue existing use, at less than market value.

**Special Purchaser**: the Council's Policy allows for direct sale at less than market value to a purchaser to whom a particular asset has a special value because of the advantages arising from its ownership that would not be available to general purchasers in the market and that's currently in play to sell Blackgang Chine car park to Southern Vectis.

But, as David Pugh's decision has ruled both of these out in respect of Ventnor's Salisbury Gardens, we're left with the Localism Act's:

**Community Right to Bid** under which we've nominated Salisbury Gardens as an Asset of Community Value. If the Council accepts that nomination, the building will be put on a list of local buildings that cannot be sold without us having up to 6 months to develop a bid for it in an open market sale, though no guarantee of success against private sector bidders.

---

## DAVID PUGH SAYS NO

The fact that a development of such major importance to this town can be prevented on one man's authority raises serious issues about democracy on the Island.

That David Pugh is willing to reject a project that fits entirely with his Council's declared top priority of regeneration and employment and has the support of all the related professional agencies is even more disturbing.

That he was even unwilling to meet with the town's Mayor and Deputy Mayor to explore the options, much less consult with Ventnor residents, borders on contempt for a town's needs and aspirations.

His sole interest in the building is as an asset to be stripped to secure £400,000 for his Council's capital programme.

---

## YOUR SAY...

We are determined that every Ventnor resident has the opportunity to have a say about the future of Salisbury Gardens. There are several ways for that to happen:

**Reply Card** included with this publication is a pre-paid reply card. Please just complete the details on the back and post it – there's no need for a stamp.

**Web Site** Following the link to the consultation on this issue on the Home Page of the Town Council's web site at [www.ventnortowncouncil.org.uk](http://www.ventnortowncouncil.org.uk), will take you to a short form to complete.

**Letters** write to us at Ventnor Town Council, Coastal Centre, Dudley Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1EJ or put a note in our letter box at the eastern end of the building.

**Petition** download a petition form from the other Home Page link, or collect one from our office or from your Town Councillor and ask your neighbours and friends to sign up to it if they are willing and return it to us.

